

TRANSCRIPT OF AUDIOTAPE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

AIMS High School Graduation Date
FOCUS GROUP

FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA

MARCH 16, 2001

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

THE MODERATOR: I'll assume that I've said good morning to everybody.

PARTICIPANT: Yes, good morning.

THE MODERATOR: Welcome. I feel like maybe some of you or most of you should say welcome to me because most people are from this area.

My name is Kavemuui Murangi. I work for the Arizona Department of Education. I've been there for three years now, and I will be facilitating this session or this focus group meeting.

We are very pleased that you could come. We know how busy you all are but this is an important issue, and we appreciate you taking your time to come and give us some insight and advise the department how to proceed.

This meeting is one of a series of activities designed to gather public input regarding the high school graduation date for AIMS. A survey was sent out in January to educators, business leaders, parents, community leaders, and the world at large. This week we had three town hall meetings, one in Flagstaff, Tucson, and Phoenix. In addition, we are conducting

three focus groups to gather more in-depth discussion of some of these issues, and the participants in these focus groups are a cross-section of community leaders like yourselves. So we are very pleased that you could come.

As you can see, at the top of the agenda, if you have a copy, we're scheduled until 11:00. This is a fairly small group and if we finish early, that would be fine. If we don't, that's okay, too.

What we will do with the discussion, the thoughts, the ideas that come up from this meeting is that they will be summarized along with the input from the surveys, from the town hall meetings, and they will be presented to the Board on March 26th.

We are going to record the meeting, just to make sure that we fully capture your views, and then we'll analyze the data and look at it closely again. So I hope people are comfortable with that, but please be assured that your name will not be associated with any specific comments. Perhaps that does not even matter.

Our role here is as -- I'm from ADE, and I'll be facilitating. I have Dr. Paul Young, and he's going to be recording and taking notes. Our role is -- that's the extent of ADE's and State Board's role at

this meeting.

This is your meeting. We want to hear your views, your perspectives, and all views are important. I hope we'll follow a sort of informal conversational format. I'll try to make sure that everyone has a chance to speak, and I think we'll have a good and productive dialogue.

We have a sign-in sheet. Please initial -- put your name next to your name that's as it appears on the sheet. Our host is very gracious and we have some coffee here and some water.

PARTICIPANT: Not much water.

THE MODERATOR: Not much water. Some water.

PARTICIPANT: Some water.

THE MODERATOR: There's a water fountain right across here, and the bathrooms are, I think, through this door. Gentlemen is here and the ladies' room across.

Okay. Let's quickly go around the table and give each person a chance to tell us who you are and what you do. Good morning.

PARTICIPANT: Good morning.

THE MODERATOR: Welcome.

(Introductions made.)

THE MODERATOR: Very interesting. You folks

are in many roles, leadership roles, and I think we're going to have a great discussion this morning.

Dr. Young, would you like to introduce your role?

PARTICIPANT: Like me to do that?

THE COURT: Yes, please.

PARTICIPANT: My name is Paul Young.

THE MODERATOR:

We have -- there's an AIMS fact sheet, and the purpose of that is really to use as a reference sheet throughout this discussion. We tried to put some of the basic facts on this sheet, facts that most if not all people are familiar with, so this is merely a reference sheet.

Let's take a few minutes and go over this. We're not going to discuss this document, but it is there for you to use as a reference sheet. So if you just take a few minutes and quietly look at the document.

(Silence.)

THE MODERATOR: Okay. Are there any questions on any facts here?

Okay. Let's go ahead and then start

discussing the issue that brought us here. And we will frame the discussion in terms of the two questions that were sent out to the world, as Billy likes to say, and really, that's what we tried to do.

One of the benefits of the focus group is that you have follow-up and you can discuss the issue in depth, and that's something that one cannot do with a survey. Of course, we have an exchange of ideas and then people are informed by the views of others. So this is a critical part of this information gathering.

The first question that was sent out is, what date would you recommended as the effective date for AIMS to be a graduation requirement for high school students. You may recommend different dates for the three sub-tests, mathematics, reading and writing. Please explain why.

Second question, in your opinion, what steps are necessary at the school/district/state level to implement AIMS as a high school graduation requirement.

The questions are linked. I mean, that's -- they arguably might be difficult to separate but, in fact, we want to discuss them together. Simply for the purpose of discussion, let's start with the second question and perhaps try to decide some of the issues,

some of the factors, some of the necessary steps that need to be in place so that we can feel comfortable about the high school graduation requirement, and we work our way towards a date that we could recommend as the effective date to the Board.

And at this point, I'll really open it to everybody who wants to jump in. What steps are necessary at the school district state level to implement AIMS as a high school graduation requirement?

PARTICIPANT: Well, I'll start. Some of these things, I think, will come along as the process continues. We're still going to be getting some of this.

But it has been mentioned from our classified staff, who's responsible for documenting all of these results, keeping track of what happens and so on, that it would be helpful from the state if we could, first of all, get as accurate accounting of results as possible in as timely a manner as possible. Because sometimes we've gotten a list two weeks before the test, and it's really difficult to do anything additional toward remediation or tutorials, things like that, prior to the next test date.

So, and I know some of these things as we

discuss today may be already things that you have addressed at other forums, so forgive me. I haven't been to all of those. But just from a logistical standpoint, steps that can help us at the school level from the state, that would be most helpful.

Also, for example, when our students take an SAT test or an ACT test, when we get the results back, they come to us on a stick tab form. So as we get into the times coming up where things can be put on the students' records, it would be really helpful if the results could come to us from the state on a stick tab form that could be placed on the transcripts, and that is going to be allowed to happen. There are only certain years that we can put those stick tabs on.

But then those results are right there, they're already put in the transcript, rather than different sites coming up with their own ways. If we could get that data together at the district level, that's a really helpful tool that comes to us from testing entities.

PARTICIPANT: One consideration that comes up over and over again from parents and teachers is the amount of time we're spending on testing that takes away from instructional time.

And I know there are discussions about adding

days to the calendar to make up for that, but that is an issue, because if we're going to raise the bar and continue to raise the standards, then -- we're still continuing here, for example, in Flagstaff, with Stanford 9 assessments at grades -- in high school, at grades 9, 10, and 11, because they test different things and the data that results from those tests are different.

So we feel it's important that we have that information, so we're continuing that testing as well. That means two more days of testing. So that's an issue just from the school level.

Another thing that I think would be really interesting for you, my school is what I'd call an average size high school. I have about 1,400 students, depending on what type of year it is, and that's a nice size high school to work with. I know there are some that are smaller and some that are considerably larger in the state, so I'm real happy to have that size high school.

I have, in my office, stacks and stacks of different schedules and logistics for all the different testing scenarios that are created by all of these different committees for testing, who's left to test, which cohort and which group is needing to do what, and

it's unbelievable the planning of all of that. I'm thinking, as we get into this, that it would be wonderful to have an opportunity to share among educators different schedules that have come up, what seems to be working.

In our district, it's really difficult to test after school and on Saturdays because we have so many students that ride the bus into school that come from a long way to go to school. And so those issues are difficult to accommodate, so the scheduling piece, the tracking of who needs to take what test, who has not tested, and what opportunity -- just logistical things.

I'm not hearing from most teachers at all that they -- this has been a good process in terms of raising the bar, improving the inclusion of standards in curriculum. All these things have been good. I think you see just from your fact sheet here that the writing results have steadily improved at each opportunity for testing, and certainly I think that's the result of focusing on standards, not teaching to a test but focusing on standards and getting the same clear message to all of our communities that this is important and kids need to have the best education that we can possibly give them so that they can do well when

they leave us.

But the logistical pieces seem to be the (tape inaudible) right now that we could really talk more about. Like, I'd love to have -- maybe you could go into any high school anywhere and look at all the schedules and the different inordinate amounts of hours that are spent on trying to coordinate all of this, send letters out to parents with who's passed what and then kids come in with a card and say, but I got this and it said I passed that, the news we got said you didn't. And it's just that kind of stuff that we need to perfect and work on. So that's just my initial thoughts.

PARTICIPANT: I'd like to (tape inaudible). I really appreciate that the state department worked with the legislature to provide these additional days, but I think it's too late for us to go with the current dates. And so when you talk about -- I would -- I'm very conflicted about suggesting later on that we move the date because I think there are problems (tape inaudible).

But without these additional days in place, a lot of the things that need to be done will not get done. And so I appreciate what the state department did. I think it was done too late.

And I think that that concern spreads into some other areas. The reason I brought my textbook, I wasn't going to do homework here. This is a textbook that we adopted several years ago. It cost a lot of money, (tape inaudible) dollars. It was adopted before the standards were developed.

So if I want to teach -- and I don't teach from a textbook as if that's my life, but if I want to teach what the state is going to probably be testing, the persuasive writing, I have a textbook that has three examples of persuasive -- and it's not writing, it's speeches -- Patrick Henry, Martin Luther King, and I forget the other one. These are not good models for what you're going to ask for. So in terms of materials, we're at a disadvantage. This is one class, one group of kids, but I think it's probably multiplied across the state.

In preparing, I go to the websites of other states for materials, so I think the state department could help us. And the news media, apparently, helped us by forcing the state department to release sample questions. And so that kind of thing also forces me to believe that we need to push this to a later date so that we can incorporate some of this new information.

And then to follow up on the other thing she

said, the tracking of progress, from the classroom teacher point of view, I want to use the test in an informative way. So in addition to stick tabs, I want to be able to see, in some easily accessible way, perhaps an electronic format, what the individuals in my classroom need. I have to have that information. Otherwise, I'm teaching things to people who are already competent, that's not good, and I'm teaching -- and I'm failing to teach things to students in areas of -- that they have deficiencies in. And how can I tailor my teaching without that?

And then a third follow-up on her remark, I think it was in her comments, I'm real concerned about the overemphasis on -- I'm an English teacher and I love to focus on English, but I'm concerned about the overemphasis on reading, writing, and mathematics. I'm afraid very seriously that the arts are going to be damaged by this and that foreign language and science and all those kinds of other content areas are going to be neglected. And my -- I don't read extensively in this area, but my understanding is that in other states that have had high-stakes testing, that's exactly what happens.

So I'm very concerned about that, that we will become overly focused on these three areas of

instruction, which are crucial, but I basically consider these elementary subjects. I think that English is an enrichment subject at the high school level, for most kids, that -- and mathematics is an enrichment subject. It's a tool to help you learn. These are tools to help you learn in more -- I don't know how to describe it -- in content areas that have more of a real-world form to it, drawing, dance, and science and history.

And those, to me, are the real contents. I'm just -- I'm in a tool content area. We don't have a culture where reading and writing are jobs. They're tools for jobs. History and science and performing arts, those are jobs, see, so that's the perspective I'm coming from. I think we have a real danger, then, of shifting away from the business of school and we become a test prep agency.

PARTICIPANT: And I'd like to just respond. Where I take that to is, I take it down to my third grade grandson, and I want him to be able to read and write and do math at the level he is on. And all of that other stuff is all wonderful and not (tape inaudible), but I see this as just, you know, get the basics down and all the other things are there.

I'd like -- with our faculty, we focus on,

hey, take care of this. This is -- this should be there. Every student should be able to read, write, and do math, and let's just take care of it, get it off our shoulders. And all that other stuff is there, but we can't ignore this and say, well, you know, we want all these other pieces. And so that's just how I see it.

I'd like to respond and go into what she said, and I agree the data management is a challenge. We started two years ago and built our own data management system, with the expectation we put the data in, but what we've struggled with is getting the data on a disk. And we haven't been able to do it yet in the efforts we've made. We've received some things, but even from Stanford 9, we haven't been able to get the data in the form that we could just download it into our database.

And I think that's just a critical piece, that we not get written reports and that tabs are nice, but if we have an electronic way we can put it into any system we have and then produce it for teachers in the classroom, we can bring it out in many different formats and we can keep track of it, and that's just real critical.

Also, the issue of time for testing, what

we've done at Sedona Red Rock High School is we do late starts, and all of the students that don't test, that don't have to test, it's like a reward. They stay home.

But the point, I think, is real important is that we want really good testing conditions, and so to get good testing conditions you can't -- there's no possibility of doing that and keeping everybody in school at the same time. You know, we have big assemblies in the auditorium and we'll have kids in the gym and we'll do this and we'll do that, and all of that just takes away from what we're trying to do. So it will become a concern, but I think as more and more kids pass it, what we're seeing is that we just have fewer testers and retesters, and so it actually becomes more manageable.

I wanted to refer to what we need from the state. I think we need strong leadership from the state. If I'm going to lead parents, students, and teachers in an effort to focus on the standards and the outcomes, I have to also have strong leadership to look up to.

So when I get people on board and lead them and motivate them and tell them, this is going to happen and we need to be prepared, and now we have to

move funds here and there -- and maybe you can speak to what we've done with ESL -- and we get that going, and then we read in the papers, oh, my gosh, it's going to be postponed and something else is going to happen, something -- I lose credibility. We -- the teachers lose credibility. The parents begin to wonder what's up, and everybody -- and so we can't really move forward if we don't have that strong leadership.

So I just want -- as a principal, I want you to tell me, if number 6 are the graduation dates, I want to know that, and I don't want to hear next week that it's going to change. You know, I think all of us, we can find ways to meet the challenge, but we can't have it moving all over the place. So that's what I really need, is leadership. Tell me what is expected, and then I will help other people reach that.

And then funding. We all talk about money, money, money, we need more money. I think we do need funding for low performing schools, we need funding where we're not reaching the standards. We need funding. And I'd like to see the funding be formulated in grants with specific attached outcomes, and if the school meets the outcomes, then they get their increased funding the next year and they continue with

the funding as long as they're meeting -- they're showing progress towards those outcomes.

And one last point I want to make on reporting. I really think we need -- it's critical that we have the percentage of students that took the test on the data that comes back. We are looking -- all of us are looking for models. You know, in our district, we are great in reading and writing, and relatively -- we're not bad in math, but we're bad in math. I mean, statewide we're not bad in math, you know. We're looking for schools that did really well in math, and we want to go see, where are the best practices. We want to look at the models, we want to visit those schools.

But right now, when I look at that data, I don't know where to go because I'm not sure that the data's sound, because I don't know what percentage of students took the test. And so until I know what percentage took the test, I'm not going to invest time and energy and people in going to visit model programs, because what they might really be getting is a good result because they've only tested 70 percent of their kids. So that's another point.

PARTICIPANT: I want to go back to your question, too. Personally, I still believe there's a

fundamental problem that starts at the beginning of this thing, and that is that I'm not sure that either the public, and I'm fairly certain that the teachers, do not understand what the answer to the question is -- this is around expectations.

We talk about expectations, raising the bar, all of those nice little words, but I don't think that there is a relationship between what we hold for every student in terms of graduation, that is, what doors do we expect to remain open for that student when they graduate.

I don't know if I'm making sense here, but the issue is, when we were asking for high expectations and raising the bar, how far do we expect to go with that in terms of every student who we're expecting to pass this test.

For example, mathematics is, have we determined that every student does need some level of calculus, and is that the bar at which we want to set for every student within the school district? And if that's the issue, I think that needs to be explained to both the public and to teachers, and certainly to kids. Because I don't think they understand that.

You're asking, in your opinion, what steps are necessary to do this. I think that explanation is

not clear. And there's some pretty fundamental philosophy attached to that and, you know, that gets right to the depth or heart, I think, of public education, any education, is what doors do you want to have closed for kids.

And it comes right down to, if you want to be a doctor, if you have not had a considerable amount of mathematics and science and you graduate from high school and you have not had those, those doors are closed. I mean, unless you're willing to go back to high school and take those courses over again, you don't usually get the opportunity to do those again in college. Chemistry, pretty fundamental. If you haven't had it, you're not going.

And I think people have -- it's not clear to the public where that line is. I think that that has to be clear before you start telling them what the bar is. Because right now, I don't think it is. When I talk to faculty and staff, they don't know. And if that's where the argument begins -- I sat there last night, you know, I heard all those arguments about, "My kid isn't going to do that." No one has had that discussion. At least, if it's been had, it's not publicly well known. So I just think that is a critical issue for you.

Some of the other things that are there, I think there does have to be some correlation between grades and assessment. It's kind of the basics of this issue, but there should be -- when you're looking at students' grades in school, I would think that they would be fairly, fairly well correlated to the scores that you have down here on the sheet. And if they're not, I think there should be some questions being asked within the system.

And actually, I think universities do have a role in this, is that at least if I'm reading the papers right, I hear that people are looking for higher expectations of students coming into the university, and I think that has a lot to say about that basic question of what you expect kids to leave with. And I don't think people are clear on that.

The timing of the tests is critical. If you're going to do something about remediation or hooking it up with grades, you can't do it at the end of the year and keep your fingers crossed that somebody's going to pick that up next year. Isn't going to happen. You need to change it somewhere, and you need to do it at a time where it impacts the actual class that's taking the test.

And then I would suggest to you that in order

to get to this, you need some very careful analysis of your current results. I mean, let's look at the current results. If you take the current third grade, you know, you've got 70 percent, 67 percent, 48 percent. The fifth grade, it's going downhill. They're 65, 46, 39. What happened to the eighth grade? It goes up to 81, 48, and 16. And then you look at the rest of it, generally 68, 34, and 17.

And you might even want to consider a staggered -- and I know that you have a staggered kind of implementation, but I think you need to look very carefully, analyze carefully what kind of results you're getting.

It's pretty clear that the state of Arizona, in terms of what you're asking for mathematics, we're miles behind what you're asking. And again, that goes back to the basic assumption, what are you asking, what is the bar for mathematics? I don't think people know it. I don't think they understand it.

And then I would say two things plainly, is that the whole issue about mathematics, I think you need to look carefully at what it is that you're asking for graduation requirements in Arizona for math. I mean, right now you can get away with two years of general math, but that's not what you're asking.

You're asking for something a whole lot more than that.

So change the requirement at the state level. Change it to fit the bar that you're asking kids to walk under -- over, under, whichever. Because without that, I mean, you've got the state going one direction, saying yes, two years of general math is fine, and then you're saying, but you've got to pass a test that requires calculus.

You know, fix it. Fix it. Make it come together before you require them to -- you've got down here the class of 2004. I would ask you to fix the problem internally before you're asking these kids to do that. You haven't done it, so do that.

Then the last thing is just about standards. We ought to be teaching the standards. I couldn't agree with you more about the basics. Teach the standards, but get teachers tuned in to the strategies that meet those standards. We're not anywhere close. I know not in our district. You may be better. You're probably better than we are, I don't know, but we're not close.

And when we get the teachers tuned in to standards, it should become clear that we're not trying to disrupt his English class. Those standards are

(tape inaudible) and then they can go on with the rest of their class. But until we have done that, give us the time, the money, and the incentive to get those pieces done.

And when we get those done, you won't be asking -- we won't be sitting here talking about results. We will be talking about the critical issue, which is, how do we get them done. That's the critical issue.

THE MODERATOR: Let's -- we're going to go through this in several rounds so that people are not waiting too long. If you could just say initial thoughts on this issue and then we can come back to some of the other issues.

PARTICIPANT: Regarding number 2, the steps necessary, I agree wholeheartedly with what he just stated, and her. Resources are needed, and I know that boils down to money and funding. Until teachers -- and this deals strongly with school district leadership. When every single teacher is fully aware and cognizant of the standards and has good strategies and pedagogy to implement those standards, that has to be the foundation before testing.

And I'm a firm believer in the plural cycle

of learning. We cannot ignore higher education and what -- and how preservice teachers are being trained. If we're not getting good teachers out of our universities who are also cognizant and are developing or have developed good pedagogy for teaching the standards, implementing them and being creative and fun with them with kids, then, as one of my teachers stated, I think AIMS will work as long as the emphasis remains on the learning process, and if that learning process remains exciting in the classroom.

So we need a lot of support from the state, whether it's through staff development opportunities, workshops, training on implementing the standards across the nine standards. So that is my comment regarding that.

Regarding the date for an effective graduation date, our school feels -- we feel very comfortable right now where we are with reading. We're disappointed in writing, and when the time comes, I'd like to share my teachers' concerns regarding the writing portion of the exam and how the scores are being evaluated. Minimally for the reading and the writing, 2004.

Mathematics, my mathematics teachers are stating until they're beginning at grades 3 and 4,

where there is that beginning stage at the elementary level for teaching of the standards, learning of the standards, how can we possibly expect our high schools to be catching up.

So the focus needs to begin at the elementary level, and allow time so that by the time the sixth graders graduate into middle school and by the time we high school administrators get those incoming ninth graders, hopefully they're going to be well prepared. And so the cycle really needs to focus at the elementary level. And so my math teachers are stating, no sooner than 2008, 2009 for mathematics.

PARTICIPANT: A couple of impressions, if I may. I'd like for you to reinforce the numbers (tape inaudible).

I think one of the recent presentations that I enjoyed was on the arts and education, and I'd like to hook this into her comments, because good pedagogy will definitely incorporate the arts. Children will learn so much more about what they are trying to write and they'll do it better if they have a picture alongside it, as a very rudimentary example. And I think the same thing is true of science, that good pedagogy will incorporate the kind of curiosity and the game playing and the exploration (tape inaudible).

And I'd like to reinforce the notion about resources. It seems to me money -- we get accused of always asking for money, but we do need money to help teachers get ready to do these things that we're asking them to do. But also, I think as everyone in this group knows, I'm sure, some children need more time to learn than others.

And here we are, and it's true of almost everyone in our district, (tape inaudible) 600, something like that, we want to get more money. But we have a tremendous range and we have (tape inaudible) and we have many, many students who, in an ordinary, structured school day, don't have enough time to learn to read. So if the state could help us, and it does help some, the remediation that we are going to be able to provide through the Prop 301 clause. But I think we need to go further than that and take a realistic account of the different time needs of the different kids.

And the final point I'd make on this issue is related to his point of view.

(End of tape.)

-- and whether it has made a difference in their life. Most of them didn't know (tape inaudible). There is so much to learn in this world.

Are we sure that we want to have people pass or fail on the basis of testing.

And I'm glad you're going to talk later about (tape inaudible) the test, because that's a very crucial issue, I think. We certainly want people to be able to express themselves. And I'm no expert on what should be in the tests, but (tape inaudible).

So I think resources, pedagogy, and for these other problems, (tape inaudible). But then also, this basic -- he phrased it as a philosophical issue, where you want the children to be. Do you want to include the whole school in them or do you want to set a basic (tape inaudible).

PARTICIPANT: It's a real interesting question (tape inaudible) our children. And I'm particularly concerned with the (tape inaudible), particularly Native American minority students, when you factor in the issues of English as a second language and (tape inaudible).

And then given the perception that's already been dealt with or described, and that the system is not prepared -- either prepared enough to expect these kind of results from grade level -- from lower grade level all the way through high school and graduation, then why are we asking that these standards be met?

That doesn't seem fair.

For that main reason (tape inaudible), the test should not be implemented until -- I think he mentioned, correct me if I'm wrong, if the problems internally aren't addressed and solved or (tape inaudible). And until that happens, I don't see how (tape inaudible).

PARTICIPANT: I'd like to address the ESL situation also. I firmly would hope that my students can meet those standards when they graduate. The majority of my ESL students are Hispanic, and being at the level when they leave high school, they stay at a certain socioeconomic level, I would want them to exceed that, and I think these standards will help them do that.

My concern is, though, with the catching up, as she was saying, starting in elementary school. I've got a lot of my high school kids that come in and they're in our high school system for two years, and so it's really hard to get their English skills up to that level where they can pass this test that was geared, I believe, towards a native English-speaking student, when these kids aren't native English speaking.

So I would -- I think support from the state in that area, going back to what she was saying, if we

could look at different schools that are succeeding in the ESL area, how they're doing, also making clear the standards for ESL, how they're being evaluated, so that I can know, as a teacher, as their teacher, how to help them meet those standards.

PARTICIPANT: To follow up on that and something that he said, too, I would hope that the state would be able to make the same kind of accommodations that a teacher does when they give a grade. And I know that's very difficult to do, but he mentioned the grades and the test scores should correspond in some way.

Well, in real life, in real teaching, you don't simply grade on the basis of your tests, and the test is only a test. And so that's why there would be a discrepancy between the two. You would take a student who had been in this country for two years and started as a junior and spends their senior year here, and you would give them a pass/fail on graduation based on what you would expect for them being here two years.

And I think the state has to do the same thing. I think even if we change the date -- and I'm really not personally in favor of that -- even if we change the date, it still wouldn't change the fact that

everybody taking the test is not the same.

And we are accommodating for Spanish speakers. Why just Spanish speakers? Well, because it's economically feasible to do. Shouldn't we accommodate for every language minority? Well, I think so, but it's probably not economically feasible. We have some 70 language groups in our district, or 60 language groups in our district.

So the only way that I think we could -- and we've heard this from AEA. You have to have something besides a single outcome on this graduation requirement. There has to be something else. Some states offer incentives to students. When I was looking for materials, Michigan gives students who do very well on their tests \$2,500. That seems like an option. You'd probably save that in lawsuits.

You could have multiple graduation stamps to go on a diploma. You could have -- you could -- I think you could legitimately give diplomas to kids that have does not or approaches standards as a part of the performance.

You know, those are -- I think the state department has to look at options other than pass the test. Because otherwise, kids are getting discouraged. I had kids last term who were

discouraged. I just heard yesterday someone at lunch, a fifth grader, a relative told this teacher, "I'm not going to be able to pass the AIMS. When I get to high school, I'm going to drop out." We don't want that to happen. The state department has to deal with that issue.

THE MODERATOR: Let's stay on this issue of ESL language, minority language, kids that need more time to learn. How do we -- what can be done in this context of higher standards, high expectations for all students, what can we do to address some of the needs of these students. And perhaps, also, what about the school and the district?

What are some of the things that might need to happen at those levels to deal with this issue?

PARTICIPANT: I would just like to read a statement from our school's special education teacher. Her concern is the out-of-level testing. And she responded by stating: "Out-of-level tests that are currently being used are not very valid since they are written for age appropriateness. What is appropriate for a fifth grader is certainly not appropriate for a tenth grader. Not only does it produce invalid test results, but it is also demeaning to the students who

have to take them." That is one of her biggest concerns.

As a parent, my daughter, currently in eighth grade, has a severe learning disability in math. She, a year ago, in seventh grade, came home crying, worried about AIMS. This year she's having a much better year, but she's also part of the district's AIMS intervention, where she is receiving special tutoring once a week, and it's greatly helping her.

But I wish my charter school had the resources to do the same thing right now. I am greatly concerned about minority students, about students like my own daughter and our special needs students that attend Fowler who need extra time. It's difficult for them to meet the same type of standards. And my special education teacher has recommended that the state come up with some type of flexibility with alternative testing for special needs students or an alternative way to assess that they are indeed learning.

PARTICIPANT: You know, I guess I wonder, if AIMS were not -- if AIMS was not implemented and we didn't have this test that we could look at that makes us focus on the standards, would your daughter be receiving that special math tutoring? I mean, I guess

that's how I look at it.

I've been in the game a long time, and I have seen ESL kids ignored. I have seen special ed kids graduating with 3.5s when they can't -- they're reading at a fourth grade reading level, because we've done these wonderful accommodations. But what we really have not done is help them gain the skills they need to be successful, and as long as we keep --

For me, I have seen teachers focus on the standards and the instruction because of AIMS. And I can tell you, if AIMS was not here, they would not be doing that. I'm an English teacher, and if I had my choice of teaching students to write or having them discuss a wonderful short story, I'd probably choose the short story. And we have people making those choices all the time.

And so what we do with those standards, we say, okay, we have standards, and every kid counts. Well, our ESL kids, until AIMS was implemented, were just there. I mean, they're sitting in classes. They don't speak the language. We had them all mainstreamed into all the classes and like one ESL class, and they're sitting in there and they can't read the book, and they don't understand what's happening. But they're graduating. Yeah, they're getting grades, the

teacher's going, "Well, you know, he's ESL, so I'm going to give him a B. But I'm not teaching him, I'm just going to give him a grade and pass him off."

And so it's hard right now, it's hard to look at kids that are not succeeding at the test, but if we don't hold -- if we don't say the test is for every kid, then what interest is there -- I mean, what, there are a few martyrs running around, but the rest of the people are not going to go, "Okay, let's take the money from here and move it over here."

We bought laptop computers for our ESL kids that they check out like library books now. We increased our ESL program, and we have now -- she is doing like a special ed model. She goes into the classroom and works with the regular ed teachers and works right with the groups of ESL kids in the class, where before they were just on their own.

We have not done that just because we focused on ESL kids and said that they need this. We were ignoring them until the AIMS test came. We were just -- I don't know what we were doing, but we weren't doing what we are doing now. There's a focus and a passion and an interest, and it's forcing us to look at all of our kids, not just our top-end kids.

PARTICIPANT: If you do that, would you not

be able (tape inaudible).

PARTICIPANT: Well, it hasn't happened. I haven't seen it happen in 25 years, and because I think it is looking in the eye. I think it's been -- I have to look at a student and a teacher has to look at that student, and say, "Yeah, you're not going to graduate because I didn't teach you what you needed to learn." It's personal. When a kid is not going to graduate, it becomes personal. That's what I think the difference is.

PARTICIPANT: I would just kind of like to address this issue and go back to the training, something that has been mentioned earlier. I still kind of find it a little crazy that, you know, we have special education certificates coming out of the university level, we have ESL certificates, and we are hiring teachers, oh, well, we need you because you are an ESL certified teacher there. Then, you know, you can teach and work with our minority population. Or, you are special ed certified so, you know, you can work with our special ed teachers.

I think it needs to be inclusive, starting at the university level, in that we are working with all kids, and the expectation is that we will take all kids and teach them to meet the standard.

PARTICIPANT: I want to go back a little bit to -- one of my concerns is if we did have the standards, and that's a good question -- social promotion or promotion just based on, you know, we just let kids go through the system. What happens when they become 25, 30 years old, they have two or three children, and the parents themselves are functioning at a second, third grade level? What type of job are they going to be able to go out and receive? What kind of support are they going to be able to offer to their children?

That's, you know, the main reason why I really feel -- I believe that there have been too many kids that have gone through the system without the accountability, and either we're going to pay for it now or we're going to pay for it later. And right now, we are paying for it later.

Again, I believe that the training in the standards, I agree with him 110 percent. If we, in our own school systems, in our own schools, have not aligned ourselves with the teaching of the standards or within the district or even within the state, we need to get our teachers trained so that there is consistency throughout the system.

And the final comment that I would like to

make is that, again, I think going back to the foundation of this whole program, we are looking at the state, we are looking at the school district, we are looking at the legislature, parents, community members, Knock Up, you know, those sorts of agencies. I think we need to begin to start looking at this as a "we" thing.

Because we have too many -- we are all working in isolation, and everybody's telling everybody what they need to do. Everybody's pointing the finger. We need to sit down and we need to say, we believe that this is what is in the best interests of kids, and we are doing this, and we all believe in it. And we need to get the reassurance from everybody that we are working on this together and that our goals are all the same.

PARTICIPANT: On Navajo, there is like approximately five school districts on Navajo nation that are performing at zero percent at meeting the standard in math, and there are still several in writing that have zero percent. And reading is a little bit higher than the two subjects, but in math, if there is a percentage that have met the standards, it's maybe like 2 percent or something, from the analysis that I did of our schools.

And I have done other work with individual student data and other standardized exams such as Stanford 9, and from what we are learning there is that there are students that are performing very well on standardized exams on Navajo, but there are just not enough to pull up the rest of the percentage. And I'm pretty much sure -- very sure that this is also happening on this standardized exam of AIMS that is happening with the Stanford 9 that I looked at.

And it's not the -- in looking into school organization effects, it's not the students' fault that they're scoring -- performing these scores on AIMS. We believe it's a school organization effect, the administration and teacher turnover and lack of curriculum alignment, and the emphasis and implementation of teaching the Arizona academic standards in the classroom. That's what we are looking into, that theory there, and I really support that.

The graduation date requirement should start with like our elementary students, like today's third grade or fifth grade class in order for a good percentage of our students to meet the standards by the time they graduate from high school.

And I also support the need for more money for teacher preparation and student remediation, more

emphasis on curriculum alignment from grade to grade, and also data management is an issue. We have some grant schools that have taken the AIMS last spring and they've come to us actually bringing their data in a box for us to help them. And we've done it. We've put it into Excel, each score, subtest, and we did that analysis for them.

And I'm sure that this is also happening with public schools, that they need help. Even though the grant schools are not under the -- they're not the responsibility of Arizona Department of Education, I'm sure they're dealing with data management issues also in the public schools. That's my comments.

PARTICIPANT: My comment is just responding a minute to some of the comments she made and go back to how we started out talking today, that standards have certainly caused more focus than ever before. I've seen the same in my school, and I see it statewide and even at a national level.

It's put the focus back where it needed to be and helped us to really look at the inclusion of standards in curriculums and so on. And I think we've seen the result of that focus with an increased score in every opportunity that it's given, and that was recorded on this green sheet.

But realistically, I want to talk about, again, the purpose of IEP's. They exist for a reason, and they are legally binding. And the reality is that they exist because there are some students who have profound disabilities and needs in certain areas.

And it kind of goes back, again, to what he mentioned, that what is the bar and what is the realistic achievement level of a student with a legally binding IEP. Will they ever learn calculus, no matter what tutorials you give, what you do.

And so in some regards, whether we like it or not, there are going to be -- when you're in a high-stakes test that's all or nothing, there are going to be those that are in that nothing category, and that absolute remains even with every best intention of intervention, remediation, one-on-one tutorial, whatever it might be.

I don't know that that is truly a result that they weren't taught. I think they probably will achieve at the very best level that they're capable of achieving. That's not all students, we're just talking about very specific -- we identified students, but in an all-or-nothing situation, you have to have some way to address those needs of those students.

And then back again to really analyzing the

data you have. We're in those early stages of seeing what the data is and analyzing it, but I, too, am concerned statewide. I see that the remaining students still to test, every test I give, I'm the one that looks at that list, compiles it, makes sure I see who's on that list.

The more opportunities that are given, the remaining students to test are minority and special ed students. And if we fail to look at that issue, why is that and what can be done, we're doing a great disservice to that population.

PARTICIPANT: I wear a lot of hats, and I'm out in the community a lot, and I come from an elementary background. I was at the university first, then I taught elementary school. And when I first came into the system where I'm at in the Verde Valley now, ASAP was just introduced by the state.

And it was interesting because as a career change, coming into a class, being a classroom teacher, I had veteran teachers telling me, "Don't worry about it. This too shall pass."

And I was just appalled at the attitude when I came in. And I thought, you know, this is a good instrument, and teaching ASAP and the tools that we have and the training that we have received within our

district, I thought it was good. And I was pretty naive. I learned a lot in seven years, an awful lot.

So I exited the elementary school system and am now back at the adult level. However, I still visit the local high schools, and one day a week I spend in those high schools. And I teach at the college, and I teach students who have not graduated from high school and those who have graduated from high school and that are there at the community college for a variety of reasons, so I see a real cross-section of our population who are seeking education at all levels.

I'm real concerned about what I hear from our freshmen. Every six weeks, I go to the high school and work with the Odyssey program, which is strictly a population of freshmen. And what I hear there is very disconcerting: I only have to stay until I'm 16. I will never graduate from high school with AIMS now anyway, so I'm out of here. So I don't have to listen to what you have to say. I don't have to participate. I don't have to mind my manners. My behavior is of no interest to you or to me.

All of these things are beginning to permeate this class that I saw this year, and there was a hint of it in the class that I had three years ago, as a freshman, and there was a little more last year, but

what I've seen this year just really frightens me.

And it seems that what AIMS has done and the burden that it's placed on these children is just too overwhelming for them to accept, and they say they cannot see that there is any chance for them at all, by the time they reach their senior year, that they will ever make it, so why not just give up now. Why should I put forth all that effort.

And I think a part of that may come back to the school and to parents, and I hold myself in that category. It's our responsibility that we need to talk to those students, but we also need to advocate for them. And that's another reason why I'm here, to advocate for them that for something that they have no chance of passing because they haven't been -- the skills haven't been introduced to them in a timely manner.

They've got two years, some of them three, to prepare for an assessment which has turned out to be a rite of passage for them, which they weren't aware of throughout their educational career, and now all of a sudden the rest of their life depends on it. Everybody's pretty frightened. Parents are angry because what they thought they were doing for the comfort of the child and they were trying to do the

best.

And teachers feel that they've been let down and the rug's been pulled out from under them. They weren't given the resources, they weren't given the time. And yet all along, we believe as educators that what we need to do -- that education is a process and we need to plan for that process.

But that's not what we're saying now. We're saying right now to -- you know, I have to -- I believe in my heart and I believe from talking to the students and I believe from talking to my colleagues that AIMS is a good tool, but it is just that, it's an assessment tool, not a rite of passage.

And what AIMS has forced us to do, fortunately, is to come together, I think, within our own districts, within campuses within our own districts. I think it's forced us to come together and discuss curriculum, where before I think there was probably grade level discussion but not necessarily districtwide or even statewide curriculum issues being discussed.

I think we are looking more at accountability in terms of parents and schools and the administrations and the Department of Ed so that we can all work together. That's our main goal, is to educate

children, and that it's not to place a burden on them that they're going to drop out.

But I hear the frustration from students saying I can't control the class, they don't care, they don't want to be here, to the students who say -- who just echo that and reinforce that to say, "What difference does it make? I have worked so hard to get here. I will never be able to pass that math, I know that, so I'm going to just leave. I'm going to go get my GED, and then I'm going to go on to college."

They miss so much when they lose two or three years of high school. Because not that many of those students wouldn't be able to do that. When you teach some of those students at the lower end, they are just as capable. It just takes longer, but they are just as capable.

PARTICIPANT: May I ask a question of these last two speakers? It seems to me so important this question are people going to continue (tape inaudible), is there any way that -- it's all very well, but a lot of students aren't going to get five chances.

Is there any way that we can track this? In other words, of the people who didn't do well the first time, how many show up to try it again? And even more crucial, people that try it the second time, how many

people try it a third time? We had certainly an interesting (tape inaudible) if this would be another tool to see what the effect is of these particular structures. Would such a tracking system be practiced?

PARTICIPANT: Well, we've done it with, like you say, developed our own data, but we think what would be helpful to have it tracked at a state level and be delivered to us electronically.

We've spent quite a bit of time with kids (tape inaudible), so on, but we had students, eleventh graders, who were all new to the district. They had come from Arizona, but they didn't have their reports back. They weren't on their transcripts, so we were trying to call around to find out from their schools, trying to get information whether they had passed or not, what they had passed, how many testings.

These are all some of those logistical things I was talking about earlier. We tried to err on the side of caution and we just tested them, but we couldn't prove beyond a shadow of a doubt somehow that they had passed somewhere. But it was frustrating to them as well not to have copies of that information, whether they had passed or not.

So if we had that, and it could be scores

given just like we get the data back on Stanford or SAT and ACT tests, somehow where there is an accurate accounting of that. We've built in, in our own system, Student A, test opportunity 1, test opportunity 2. It may say did not meet; the next one, not tested; the third one, whatever their score was or if they finally meet it.

But that's just what we're doing with our handful of students, which, in the scope of the whole state, is a very small amount of students compared to the thousands who are taking it.

So it's critical, again, exactly what we said, that we have some kind of master accurate accounting of the opportunities. Because I can say to a parent, well, your student didn't take it the second time. He chose not to test. They didn't take advantage of that second opportunity.

What I'm just doing here in my own district is, I'm sending a letter home -- first I sent a letter in advance, telling all parents the day the test would be given, who was testing, and (tape inaudible). And now I'm sending a letter home to every home if a student didn't test, just letting you know your student did not choose to participate. They're being counted absent. That was a requirement for the school day, so

on. But that's just the internal tracking we're doing districtwide, which, again, takes a lot of time.

PARTICIPANT: But you're talking about the people who stay with it.

PARTICIPANT: Well, I also do -- I have no idea what happens (tape inaudible).

PARTICIPANT: I think your questions, here again, it comes back to my point about getting a report of the percentage of students that took the test. Because if we don't get -- if we can't look at that data statewide with a percentage of students that took the test, the kids may not be taking the test and dropping out. And then we're going, "Oh, wow, aren't we great. We've improved our scores."

And it gets back to his comment about what are the expectations. You know, in high schools, we just have traditionally measured our success by our best kids. We know that. That's true. AP kids, college attendance, and we say, "Wow, isn't this a great school."

Meanwhile, we have kids in general math, we've dumbed down the curriculum, we've put them in something they can just get by in, and we keep looking at the top end and saying, "We're great. We're doing a great job."

But truly, that's the fear I have, is that if the expectations, which truly sometimes there are -- high-stakes tests, sometimes the people who want them and support them, they just want it to serve the high-end kids. They want to drive the curriculum up, they don't want those kids to be in classes with those slow kids and those kids that are bad kids, and they want all these -- so they want to go, "Okay, calculus for every kid."

I'm saying nonsense.

"Calculus for every kid, this will make those kids straighten up and do it right, and my kid's going to get the best education."

Meanwhile, what they really care about is just those kids, those good kids, and they're not caring that other kids fail and huge numbers drop out or huge numbers don't get diplomas. So that's one expectation or goal.

If the state is very clearly to serve every student in the public schools and charter schools and private schools in Arizona, if we really want to have all kids have a successful education, then we need to really make that clear, and we need to be able to record the data so we see if that's happening or not.

Because otherwise all we're going to do is an

injustice to those kids if we can't track how we're serving them and how it changes as a result of the information (tape inaudible).

PARTICIPANT: I think it's interesting, to further a point that someone brought up, I think it's probably true to say that minority students in general graduate on the lower end of the economic scale for themselves and their families, and with that goes the fact that they may come from unstable environments, their families in the home. And even going further under that, if you have an unstable environment in the home, what kind of support do you have from your parents and your family in terms of helping you with your education and educational goals?

Unfortunately, that probably exists here in this situation within the state. Certainly within the Navajo nation, (tape inaudible) something's wrong and something has to be done to address that, find out what the problems are and how we fix them before we move into that next step of (tape inaudible) implementation of the AIMS test.

PARTICIPANT: Let me --

THE MODERATOR: We have about 30 minutes before 11:00 o'clock. Again, if we might want to finish by 11:00, let's start to segue, I think, and it

might be difficult, (tape inaudible) but let's start talking about this issue of time. What could be an effective date. What would be optimal, something that we might want to send to the Board and say, this would be an (tape inaudible) date (tape inaudible).

PARTICIPANT: Before we do the date, can I still do one more? You said what can we do on this.

THE MODERATOR: Yes.

PARTICIPANT: That was your question. I still think there is a primary philosophical issue here that has not been addressed, and I'm not sure this is actually a state issue. I frankly think it is more a community and school-by-school and teacher-by-teacher issue, and that is that what expectation is brought to the classroom by the teacher for the students that are sitting in the classroom and when that is identified, when that teacher identifies that -- because actually, all of you were right on this point, is that some kids, you're going to come in there and you've got one expectation for them, they're never going to make it or whatever. But I mean, that's probably true in the high school.

But when you start kids in school that there has to be a clearer expectation from the teacher to the child, with the parent, with the parent that is there

so that there is clarity as to what that expectation is to result in. And frankly, I think until we ever get to that situation, we're going to have these meetings until we drown ourselves here. But --

THE MODERATOR: Can I ask you, how might -- how do you achieve that?

PARTICIPANT: Well, I'm going to get to that. For me, there is an issue of time that keeps coming up here over and over again, and that is the kid --

Have you ever taught algebra? Has anyone ever taught algebra in here? I have. Here's the problem with algebra. Every student can learn algebra, but algebra is a fixed content course. And what happens is that for Student X, if you have a fixed content course, they have to -- you have to get through that content by the time you get -- you go from autumn, September to June. Student X makes it. Not only that, Student X is probably ready to go on to Algebra II, okay.

Student Y is still trying to figure out that formula on how you solve for X, because within a 45-minute period or whatever you've got, even a 90-minute period, they didn't understand the formula, the relationship. It took them more time.

So if you taught algebra, you knew that some kids are moving right along, but for some kids -- and you were talking about your daughter having trouble with math -- you had to sit there and get them to understand the concept. It simply took more time. This does not mean the student is any brighter or any dumber. It doesn't have anything to do with that. It's simply an issue of time.

Not only that, some of those kids, once they start clicking on it, will actually outpace some of the other kids, but we never identify them. So time becomes absolutely critical.

So we have to throw out the calendars -- you know, this is personal stuff, is that we have to throw out the calendars, the clocks that we work by, by schools, because it doesn't fit kids. Time has -- get rid of it. That's one.

Two is commitment. In order to get the time, we have to have people come to the job committed to the issue of, "I don't care how long it takes, I've got to do it. I have to do it. It's the job."

I still believe that you have to focus on results. You have the time issue there, of course. But you have to know what your results are to see whether you're accomplishing your goal. I don't care

what class you're teaching. Doesn't matter. It does not matter.

Four, leadership. You guys have all talked about -- most of you are all leaders, all of you are leaders here. But leaders have to be left alone to lead, and they've got to find the followers that can do these things. They have to do that. You have to have leadership.

No leadership -- this goes all the way up to the state. No leadership, you get confused, you get all of these answers that, you know, kids are saying, well, is it or isn't it, you know, and all of that stuff. Sometimes you have to pull up your little socks or big socks and get ready, you know. And sometimes, I don't know, read the papers here in Flagstaff. It's not all pleasant. But you have to do that.

And then there is a final issue, and that is choice, is that you've got to provide the choices for kids for education. We are still an institution that teaches primarily by chalk and mortar. And most kids don't learn so well that way. So all those issues about the arts, about all of those things are very important because that's the connection to those kids to the academic areas.

But start with that issue about personal

expectation. Until you get that straightened out, it's a philosophical issue. Where do you draw that line and have the parent right in there from kindergarten on. Because without that, you can't get commitment or focus or time doesn't matter. None of those things matter, because all the kids will walk away saying, "I'm out of here. I'm done."

But if you don't get that piece done, we'll be back here next year having this conversation and the following and the following. Those are the issues. You ask what can we do. And a lot of it's internal, so help us do this.

PARTICIPANT: Could I ask a clarification before you ask that question?

THE MODERATOR: Yeah.

PARTICIPANT: Would you tell me about 6 on here? Six says graduation dates, which is the question you're asking us here. What is this?

THE MODERATOR: This is what is currently the State Board rule.

PARTICIPANT: This is the current State Board rule?

THE MODERATOR: Yeah. So, for instance, the class of 2002 would have to pass reading and writing in order to receive the high school diploma.

PARTICIPANT: And they will have had five opportunities by that time?

THE MODERATOR: Yes. That's an important condition. And for math, it's 2004. However, this is a consideration that perhaps (tape inaudible) date is this at issue and that's why the Board has decided to (tape inaudible).

PARTICIPANT: 2002 and 2003?

THE MODERATOR: 2002 and 2004. That's what's mandated now for reading, writing, and math.

PARTICIPANT: What happened to 2003?

THE MODERATOR: Pardon? (Tape inaudible).

Are there any implementation issues on dates? Should we stay with the current dates, reading, writing, 2002; 2004 for math --

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

THE MODERATOR: -- or should that be moved back, and how far back?

PARTICIPANT: The standards were adopted in 1996. If we had had a really good world, which we don't always, but let's say that we had (tape inaudible) in line by 2000. Presumably, that was the reason that the third graders were to be tested in the

year 2000. Those people will be eleventh graders in the year 2008.

So I would suggest that we put a tremendous focus on standards, that we analyze AIMS results every year and improve the AIMS testing as we go along and that the AIMS become a graduation requirement either when those children reach 11th grade or 12th grade, which would mean either the year 2008 or the year 2009.

That, by the way, is the official request and position of the governing board of the school, that we concentrate on standards, that we defer the graduation requirement but not the test, continue improving the test, always analyze it, keep it in focus as a measure of how we're doing, and then the children have to make it high stakes for them in either 2008 or 2009.

PARTICIPANT: I don't know when the exact date would be, but kind of following up on what he has said, I believe that there's got to be some systematic changes, some structural changes, and some attitudinal changes before we can hold ourselves to the accountability of saying that there is a graduation requirement.

Again, I don't believe it is something that we need to throw out with the bath water. I think it's

something that we really need to focus on, but I think these three things really need to change if we are going to be fair to every child that is going through the system.

PARTICIPANT: I think that I'm pretty much in line with what she said. At the very minimum -- and this is the position that AEA has taken, and I think I can support it -- 2007.

But I really want to reemphasize, too, that some alternative to just a single kind of diploma is really important, because of all the reasons that we've talked about. AIMS is really a double-edged sword. It has tremendous opportunity to help us improve, but it also can do a lot of damage to a few students.

And just one last thing on number 2, we really need help in the state with materials. The school district can't go to the publisher and say, we need a book that has this and that. If I want remediation materials, I have to buy materials for Florida, California, Texas, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, because those are the states that have the clout with the publishers. And that doesn't match the AIMS, necessarily. We really need that support. We need to have a textbook that has got more persuasion in it than Patrick Henry and Martin

Luther King.

PARTICIPANT: I shudder at that. Are you asking for a special textbook -- (tape inaudible). I just couldn't (tape inaudible) at all. My child has an AIMS diploma, your child just has a diploma. I think this is terrible. I'd rather have everybody have a diploma and then have some with honors and some with (tape inaudible). So two kinds of diplomas just makes me shudder.

PARTICIPANT: Could I add to what he stated. I know we're going back to number 2 a little bit, but more support and information provided back to our teachers is critical.

And I have to make statements about the writing portion of the exam, some of the concerns. My teachers are begging for samples as to what exceeds the standard in writing --

(End of tape.)

-- course combined in some manner, how are they broken down. And then the third concern is then that the differences in the language of the test versus what is being taught in the classroom. And my teacher used as an example, for example, how I define poetic devices might be different than how the test defines it and who's evaluating that test.

And thirdly, the instruction -- or fourthly, the instructions have been confusing for the students taking the tests and for those who are overseeing the testing. A classic example, one of the questions in the writing portion of the exam was to write about an issue to a school board, but the directions said write an essay. And the kids came out saying, wouldn't we be writing a letter to a school board? So little things like that that need clarification that would really assist the teachers in preparing students for the test.

But I personally believe in high standards and accountability. I have personally witnessed in my own school a great change in attitude. I think she mentioned this too. Hey, this isn't going away. We need to do a better job of raising the stakes, of raising levels of accountability, and I'd like to see that continue. I think our state has invested too much in this test to not continue to improve it.

And I would like to thank the state department for having these focus groups. I think the conversations need to continue. I've learned a lot from you today, and I agree with her, let's always be reevaluating, assessing the test, making it better to better meet the needs of all our students.

And I continue to state 2008, 2009, so that we're beginning the process at the elementary level.

PARTICIPANT: Class of 2002 are today's eleventh graders?

PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

PARTICIPANT: And then 2004 is today's ninth graders? That's quick. That's right around the corner.

PARTICIPANT: My fear about changing the dates -- and I can see both sides, definitely -- is that when 2005 comes around, there's going to be a big scramble in the high schools because high school focus has been put on the back burner, wanting to focus on the elementary schools to get them up to their standards and bring them along.

So that's my fear. I don't -- I'm kind of torn between the two. I can see -- but I still see my ESL students coming in with two years to go to high school, and it's not going to matter if they were here in third grade because they're not going to be here in third grade.

PARTICIPANT: They're also not going to come -- most of them won't have (tape inaudible).

PARTICIPANT: Right.

PARTICIPANT: But right now, as you bring in

AIMS, the accountability immediately is placed on the students. And that accountability needs to shift first -- first to the state department, who has presented this to us and giving us more information; secondly, to the schools, and the accountability needs to be at the school, at that level, with the teachers and what we're delivering in the classroom; and then finally to the student, instead of starting first with the student.

PARTICIPANT: It all boils down to leadership, which was stated over and over again, different levels.

PARTICIPANT: You know, I guess in the 31 states that -- I think there's around 31 states that have high-stakes testing, the accountability is on students because it's so difficult to put the accountability anywhere else. And by putting it on the students, you make the other partners accountable. I mean, that's kind of the practical or the reality of it.

I'm not going to speak the popular view, but I often don't, so beat me up if you want. I want the dates to stay as they are. And I believe that the AIMS high-stakes graduation requirement gives us -- puts pressure on the system, and without this pressure, we

stay at a resting state.

And the pressure is not just on kids, it is on students; but the pressure is on me as an administrator; the pressure is on every principal in every school; the pressure is on superintendents; the pressure is on the parents, who I see now getting totally involved and concerned about what's happening and what homework's being done; and it puts pressure on the state.

I mean, we -- if you hold this graduation requirement as a high-stakes test, we're going to continue to pressure you for what we need to serve kids. And that's going to work in all ways in this ecology. We're going to keep the pressure on because we have something we have to accomplish.

I just want to say, you know, in the best world, I love that plan that you just gave out. When I refer to my background in Washington State, that's what we did in Washington State. I was told -- we were all told, these kids in the third grade, when they get to the tenth grade, they're going to take the high-stakes test. You have eight years to get them ready.

The state put lots of money into staff development, lots of money into schools, into districts, to implement the standards, to train people

to teach the standards, the whole kit and caboodle, the best plan you could have, and it was wonderful. And nothing happened differently.

And when those kids got to the tenth grade, they failed the test. There were abysmal results, and then you know what happened, the political pressure came on and they said, Oh, well, we'll wait for eight more years.

That was a disaster, a disaster. And it was done everything -- we've got to start here, start here. Well, we did. We did. It's a great example to look to.

PARTICIPANT: But you can't have. I mean, the leadership must have failed, to have that test visible to everybody, see how we're doing --

PARTICIPANT: Gave it all the time, gave it every year, looked at the results, but there was no -- it wasn't -- there was no intensity.

PARTICIPANT: So where did the leadership fall down? Whose leadership, the educators or --

PARTICIPANT: Everyone's. I believe everyone's, because there was no intensity to it. It was like, "Okay, yes, these students have to be ready." And the third grade teachers knew it. They heard it every year. "They have to be ready to pass

this test in the tenth grade, and we have to teach the standards." But what happened was, they just kept doing things the way they always did.

PARTICIPANT: There was no leadership and accountability there, not the test.

PARTICIPANT: (Tape inaudible) keep doing the test like you did and then we need (tape inaudible) those schools that come up with the results, get the money grants and then they test.

PARTICIPANT: It's a great motivator. You can say that to have money attached to it, you say, wow, we get the score up this percentage point and we're going to get more money, then we could do more.

PARTICIPANT: I agree. I think we should start -- postpone it until 2008, 2009, and start with the basics (tape inaudible).

PARTICIPANT: But I also agree we've got to keep the pressure on --

PARTICIPANT: I do, too.

PARTICIPANT: -- at the secondary levels that, you know, we're not on vacation here while the elementary school folks are doing their thing. That's critical.

PARTICIPANT: But keep testing.

PARTICIPANT: Oh, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: It's about 10 minutes before 11:00, and I'm not going to attempt to summarize this. We have -- we'll go back and look at the tape and listen again and look at our notes. What I'd like to do is to just go around the table and ask if people have any final thoughts that they want to share.

So let us just go around the table, and I'll start with you.

PARTICIPANT: I'm not ready.

THE MODERATOR: Okay.

PARTICIPANT: Pass.

THE MODERATOR: You had your hand up. Who's ready?

PARTICIPANT: I'll just say, I concur with the majority of the people here. I will delineate, however, my concern is that the intensity remain at what it's at, because I think it has brought some great focus and change already.

But because of all the other things mentioned here, I recall that when I was -- the first year we were giving the reading and writing to supposedly count on the transcripts and the graduation (tape inaudible) amount of time, but it was really hard for me to

explain to the parents and the teachers how we could still be field testing in the fall when we were going to give a test that counted in spring just initially out of the gate.

And I think until we've taken care of all these internal things and it's really solved and we work hard on the education things, I have -- I know this has happened elsewhere, but during the last opportunity to take the test, I had a teacher in the district and a high elected education official who exempted their children from the test.

And we still have a lot of work to do to convince the public of what this means and the consequences of not being put through mandated, legislated, so on. If we have people at that level still not taking it seriously, we've got work to do. And no one's afraid to do that work, but to make it count for someone's graduation on all or nothing, while we haven't ironed all those things out, I'm not sure how fair that is to all students.

PARTICIPANT: Well, I said my points on the AIMS directly, but I (tape inaudible) it strikes me that the Department of Education can also have a role in helping us -- helping the public understand the relation between how children are doing in school and

whether the parents are part of a system that gave up on them in second grade.

So it seems to me it actually is the responsibility of the Department of Education to help the whole community, the whole state understand that we have to support the health of the children and the nutrition of the children and the substance abuse treatment for the parents and that we just can't take education and act as though it's totally in isolation, "We're going to get these kids passing the test, so there."

So I would hope that they could take a larger view as part of the Department of Education's responsibility. I know that they do some of that, they keep track of how many (tape inaudible), but this is a huge part of the difficulty that we're having in the school.

I haven't spoken to a teacher since I came on the Board who did not believe that teaching was getting harder and that they were working their hearts out, and just to come on and say, "Put in more hours, folks," we've got to give them the support that comes from a larger understanding in society.

PARTICIPANT: I want to pass out some comments that hundreds or maybe thousands of teachers

in the state helped to provide information, and this is from Arizona Education Association, so some of you have seen this already.

Even though I've spoken in favor of delaying it, I don't believe that we are doing -- where we would be wanting the efforts, as others have said, if we just said to the kids, okay, we're just going to erase this deadline and we're going to make a new one. I think that's wrong. That's what happened with ASAP, that's what's happened in the past, and that could be damaging. That's why I keep advocating for some kind of alternative diploma or something.

But I do think that rather than holding one group or another accountable ahead of the other, it has to be done in concert. You can't say to teachers, you don't get incentive pay unless your students did well unless the students have to be accountable. You can't say to districts, we're going to withhold funding from you if your students don't do well unless the students are held accountable and the teachers are held accountable.

And actually, I take the opposite tack. I think that the districts are doing poorly -- and I don't know how this would work, but teachers and districts and buildings that are doing poorly need more

resources, not less.

Maybe what you do is you take control of those resources away from them. You say, your students are doing poorly so we're going to add resources to you, but you can't choose how you spend those resources. We're going to have some administrative resources used in what we think is the best way. And the same thing with teachers and the same thing with districts.

I would hate to see what has been proposed, that districts be taken over by some state agency, but I think direction or at least control of certain resources might be a possible solution.

PARTICIPANT: In addition to the data several of you have mentioned that is critical in taking a look at how students are doing, percentages of students taking the test, et cetera, I don't know how this could occur because I know it would be extremely time consuming, but I think we also need to take a look at the power of qualitative data also, whether it's from focus groups like this, what is going on with the leadership of schools and district offices regarding implementation of AIMS.

I listened to the negativity from (tape inaudible), and I immediately wonder what is going on

in the leadership of those schools. What is going on in homes, where the kids have such a negative attitude towards school and life in general.

What types of support are being made available for students to succeed, whether it's anything from letters like she was doing at Flag High and informing parents, but also the support from the teachers in the classroom, "You can do this, and I'm going to make sure you do. But let's take a look at how we're going to get there."

And thirdly, the pedagogy, what is being used in schools that work, whether is it in a low-income school or a high-level, all-white school, you know, you don't have -- there's more resources in a larger district versus some in smaller, more rural districts serving more minority populations. There has to be some good qualitative data regarding what are they doing right that can be shared to help us all do our jobs better.

PARTICIPANT: I'd like to just make, again, the same comment. If the dates are changed, if it is pushed back eight years, my attitude is like, you can forget it, because you're going to lose all the momentum that has been built up. That is absolutely not, in my mind, the direction to go.

If there's a reasonable push-back of time, depending on the tests and how the students are doing right now statewide, that makes sense. We haven't even seen the new math test. I mean, the math -- that was a good direction to take. Look at that math test, take out the stuff that math nerds put in there or whoever decided that calculus should be in there and make it reasonable and then give us a chance. Again, we haven't even seen it. We haven't even taken it.

(All talking at once.)

PARTICIPANT: So, but, you know, you've taken -- the state's taken some good steps to listen to people and make some changes. Listen, make some changes.

And again, I'm going to come back to leadership too. Be leaders now. Take the lead. Move it back a little bit based on public opinion, if that's what you have to do, but to shove it back eight years, you know, I just feel like I've got to go find another state to be an administrator in, because that's a disaster. That is a disaster and a good direction that you're heading.

And then lastly, I'd say that -- I lost my mind there. Lost my last point, but I've said enough.

PARTICIPANT: Again, I'm a little out of step

with my school board here, so I hope I don't get in too much trouble here. But actually, I would stick with the reading and the writing for 2002, and I think the issue of leadership is critical here. I am afraid you will lose the momentum.

Number two, on the math issue, I think you have a bigger problem than what date or what year you've got. I mean, I'm doing this off of your results. I mean, I wrote your results down, so I'm sitting here trying to figure this out. You know, math, I kind of like it.

So, but as I look at this thing, is that before you said -- I mean, I know you've already said the date, but I see that you've got at least a four-year problem, probably a five-year problem here, and that is that the state has -- I mean, you still have a requirement of two years of mathematics, but it can be general math. I mean, are you guys -- do you follow this?

PARTICIPANT: No. I know I'm not going to say anything. (Tape inaudible).

PARTICIPANT: We follow math cores. We have a math core that we've identified that's basic algebra, basic geometry, basic (tape inaudible). That was adopted as part of (tape inaudible) must be taught

curriculum that's aligned to that new core, which will be assessed in the new test that will be given this spring.

So we said that for two years, so in that two years -- we made a math task force last summer, identify the core, that's what we're assessing, that's what should be taught within those two years.

So you're right on two years of math, two credits of math that we must be moving kids, within those two years, to have proficiency on that core. And how many concepts?

PARTICIPANT: 18 concepts and 76 performance objectives.

PARTICIPANT: So that is important to just realize that when you called it (tape inaudible) and we have been successful.

PARTICIPANT: I know that. I know that. But look at the reality within the state, and the reality within the state is -- I think I'm right about this, and I don't know, I'll ask you. Are you still teaching general math?

PARTICIPANT: No.

PARTICIPANT: Not at all?

PARTICIPANT: No. When we saw the AIMS coming, we put in algebra and algebra AB and algebra

review and prealgebra and geometry, and all of our students have to take it.

PARTICIPANT: Who else can I pick on? How about you?

PARTICIPANT: (Tape inaudible).

PARTICIPANT: We're still doing a general math.

PARTICIPANT: She's still doing one, we're still doing one. The point here is that in order to gear up for this, to gear up, is that it's not simply changing the standard that is there within the two years, it's preparing and putting the impetus for understanding to get that going within the school districts.

And I will guarantee to you that the problem here is one of those 25/75s. You know, is it -- you've got about 25 percent of the school districts either doing what you think they should be doing or thinking about doing what you think they should be doing and you've got 75 percent that are still, you know, about three years ago.

And that's the issue about leadership here, is that some of us got to step up. You know, all of the focus has been on mathematics here. You know, I read the papers (tape inaudible), but nobody has

explained the issue about what is required to get there. It's the old question I always ask, you know, if you're successful, how will you know it?

Well, I'm thinking right now, think about 75/25. That's not a good result. If you focus on results, take a look at that issue. But there is the problem, and it is a leadership problem. It's a leadership problem coming right out of Phoenix and coming out of each one of these superintendents' offices.

I asked for this when I came here, about having the chief superintendent meet with every superintendent about the instructional issues of getting this job done. I've asked for it every time I've seen her. The answer is, "I don't have time."

And the issue is, you've got to make time. I mean, you're going to get what you focus on. If the chief executive officer focuses on instructional issues, that's what you're going to get. If you're going to focus on political stuff -- no offense here. I mean, I don't mean this in a bad way. If you're going to focus on political stuff, you're going to get political stuff. But there is the problem.

So the answer to the math thing, I don't think you're going to be geared up for 2004 for that,

because I don't think the foundation is there to do it. 25 percent will be geared up to do it. The other 75 percent won't, and it will hurt your program. I'm all for your program. Believe me. You got my 100 and -- whatever, a hundred percent. That's actually -- I know they say 110, but that doesn't count.

But that's the issues, is that gear it so that somebody's talking to these people to say, here's what you got to do in order to get there. And then set your date.

I'm thinking that you can -- you know, we're late, unless she's ready to meet with us superintendents next week or something, you know, about how to change these expectations beginning this September that you've got, it's not just a problem of nine and ten. This is really a problem of at least six, seven, eight, nine, ten. That's at least the problem.

PARTICIPANT: Excuse me. You mean six, seven, eight, nine, ten of what?

PARTICIPANT: Grades, grades, grades. Yeah. Anyway, I'm done. I'm sorry.

PARTICIPANT: That's okay.

PARTICIPANT: I want to talk as a parent. Probably I'll ask forgiveness from leadership from you

now because I'll probably --

PARTICIPANT: You never did that before.

(All talking at once.)

PARTICIPANT: And again, I'm going to address this as a parent because I do have a ninth grader in the system who is going to be required to do this and to take this.

And when I go to his teachers and ask his teachers, how is he doing and they're telling me he's doing average work because he's getting a C, that's not good enough for me. I'll take -- I have taken the standards book into the classroom teacher and said, tell me which standards is he lacking on, so if there is some form of remediation or help that I can offer to him, I can get it done, because my son is going to pass these tests.

Until we get the attitude changed in our classrooms, we are going to fail kids, and it's not fair. We have got to get the structure, the system and the attitude changed before we start being unfair to kids. What that date is, I don't know. Again, I look at the leadership.

And as he has said, you know, I don't ask for permission, I just kind of do and say, hey, this is what's best for kids. We've got to have that

attitude. We've got to take this and pull our socks up and just move into it, because if not, as he mentioned at the very beginning, have we talked about or thought about the lawsuits that can come because somebody is not taking this seriously.

PARTICIPANT: I just kind of want to comment on what they had said. I'm not sure that all parents would be able to understand the standards, and I do have to commend her because they did an excellent, excellent job in informing the public of what that is. And when I went to the conferences, I was informed as a parent that my third grader last year, taking the standards, that she had done this, she has met the standard here, she exceeded the standard here, exceeded the standard here, so it was very precise. But I'm also a teacher. I know what to ask for, and all of us do.

So it comes back to what he was saying, that we need to have the parents also informed and show leadership in that area so that they can support their kids. And my daughter asked about -- somebody had mentioned that they were thinking about making the third grade test -- or if they didn't pass the third grade test, they couldn't pass the third grade.

And my first grader asked about that and I

said, "Well, that's right, you need to know this stuff before you go on." You know, of course I didn't say that that's how it was, but I was really supportive of it.

And she had a good attitude, "Well, I better, you know, try real hard in school, huh, Mom?"

"Yeah, you should."

So it's all with the leadership and going back to parents and making sure everybody knows what's expected.

PARTICIPANT: And when we try contacting parents, if we send letters home, we can't assume that the parents are reading them.

PARTICIPANT: That's for sure.

PARTICIPANT: I've done that time and time and time again.

PARTICIPANT: Early on we have to do that commitment issue with parents, and we have to know what the personal expectations are for those kids, and we have to put those together. And if we don't do that, we're going to do this every year. You didn't come up with all this stuff now. (Tape inaudible).

(All talking at once.)

THE MODERATOR: Five minutes left. Yes?

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, earlier you talked about

the importance of results. If we postpone the graduation requirement, the graduation requirement attached to the test for too long, we will not have any data. We will not have data.

And I'm going to say this right now, and probably -- you probably have the data. What data came back, what percentage of the students who were not required to take the test for graduation took the test? At one school, three kids took the test. Three. And when the class was required to take it, three missed it.

So we will not -- I will not, as a principal, be able to have any data if you postpone this test for eight years. There will be no data. I will have kids in the hundreds not taking the test. And I will have nothing to see whether we have met these standards, because I will have lost all that.

So if you -- I don't -- I think it's naive to think that you could postpone it for eight years. We'll keep giving the test, we'll get the data, we'll look at it, we'll just be able to move right along. That will not happen. Absolutely will not happen.

And I think you can go right now, if you look at percentages of students that took the test, you don't report it that way, and that's a critical flaw,

that if you go back and you look at Sedona Red Rock High School and you saw three kids took the test and then you asked us, how many kids were in that class and we told you 89, then you would know you have no data.

PARTICIPANT: I just want to make a comment as a parent. My son in the previous year (tape inaudible). And he had a hard time with math. He has not (tape inaudible) no matter what the subject is, very highly intelligent. So my concern is -- and he's also one of those kind of in a (tape inaudible), so my concern is, we have to fix this. We need pass or fail (tape inaudible).

THE MODERATOR: You want to have the last word?

PARTICIPANT: Sure. Just as a closing thought, I really appreciate the opportunity to have these focus groups, and I know you've been very busy doing this all over the state. I hope as this process continues that you'll continue this format.

I think if we had done more of this in the beginning, it would have been helpful to hear from practitioners and people in the field and so on. And I know you did some of that, but I hope you continue this. I think it's a good plan as you're going through the process.

PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for your time.

Thank you for coming.

(End of tape.)